

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MILAN 01078 150530Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMCONSUL MILAN
TO AMEMBASSY ROME
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6090
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL TRIESTE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL TURIN UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 1078

EO 11652: XGDS-1 DECLAS JULY 14, 1988
TAGS: PINT IT
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MILAN PCI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY

REF: A. MILAN 1023; B. MILAN 0029; C. MEMCON "THE CITY
COUNCIL CRISIS" OF NOV 23, 1977; D. MEMCON "NEW SOVIET CONSUL
GENERAL IN MILAN" OF MAY 8, 1978.

1. IN COURSE OF SERIES OF TALKS WITH MILAN POLITICAL LEADERS
TO GET REACTIONS TO ELECTION OF NEW PRESIDENT PERTINI,
DPO SPOKE WITH MILAN PCI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY AUGUSTO
CASTAGNA. CASTAGNA IS DOWDILY DRESSED, LOW-KEY PCI CAREER-
IST IN MID-THIRTIES. OUR OTHER MEETINGS WITH HIM ARE CITED
IN REF A, B, AND C.

2. CASTAGNA SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH SANDRO PERTINI AS
PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC. PERTINI HAD CLEAN RECORD AND HIS IN-
STALLATION SPEECH WAS IMPRESSIVE ONE THAT HAD HIT ALL RIGHT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MILAN 01078 150530Z

THEMES.

3. WHY HAD PERTINI NEVER BECOME COMMUNIST GIVEN FRIENDSHIP
HE HAD BUILT UP DURING RESISTANCE WITH GRAMSCI AND OTHER PCI
LEADERS?

4. PERTINI, REPLIED CASTAGNA, WAS NEVER CLOSE TO COMMUNISTS

POLITICALLY, THE MAIN REASON PROBABLY BEING THAT HE WAS OUT OF SYMPATHY WITH PCI'S INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION. NOR WAS PERTINI MUCH OF PSI MAN EITHER. EVEN IN HIS OWN PARTY HE HAD NOT HELD PARTY POSITION SINCE 1956.

5. HOW DID CASTAGNA SEE POLITICAL SITUATION OVER COMING MONTHS? WHICH PARTY WOULD MAKE FIRST MOVE?

6. CASTAGNA DID NOT THINK IT WOULD BE PCI. THE PARTY IN HIS VIEW WAS IN DIFFICULT BUT NOT DESPERATE POSITION. CASTAGNA AGREED WITH DPO THAT ON ONE HAND, PCI WOULD HAVE HARD TIME INCREASING ITS VOTE WHETHER IT REMAINED QUIET OR WENT ON ATTACK. TO THAT EXTENT, PARTY WAS IN NO-WIN SITUATION FOR PRESENT. ON OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, CASTAGNA THOUGHT OVERALL COMMUNIST STRATEGY OF MOVING SLOWLY INTO GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WAS ON COURSE. UNDERSTANDING (INTESA) WITH OTHER PARTIES OF FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WAS STILL IN BEING. WHEN NEXT ADVANCE WOULD OCCUR WAS HARD TO TELL. MAYBE IT WOULD EVEN BE PRECEDED BY A SETBACK. BUT OVERALL THE PROCESS OF PCI LEGITIMIZATION WAS GOING FORWARD AND THAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.

7. SOCIALISTS, SAID CASTAGNA, WERE REAL SOURCE OF POSSIBLE DISRUPTION.
LIKE CISL AND UIL PEOPLE WHO SAT AROUND WAITING FOR LAMA TO SAY SOMETHING SO THEY COULD DISAGREE WITH IT, SOCIALISTS COULD COME UP WITH NOTHING BETTER THAN TO CRITICIZE PCI.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MILAN 01078 150530Z

THAT WAS NOT MUCH OF A POLICY. ONE MIGHT DISAGREE WITH PCI'S POLICY OF HISTORIC COMPROMISE BUT AT LEAST IT WAS COHERENT STRATEGY THAT ANIMATED PCI ACTIONS AND MADE THEM INTELLIGIBLE.

8. TURNING TO THE US, DPO SAID THAT OUR GREATEST WORRY AT MOMENT WAS USSR. RUSSIANS WERE ARMING THEMSELVES AT LEVEL FAR EXCEEDING THEIR DEFENSIVE NEEDS, INTERVENING DISRUPTIVELY IN AFRICA, AND NOW CONDUCTING TRIALS OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS THAT WERE NOT ONLY GRAVE OFFENSE TO PEOPLE INVOLVED BUT PROVOCATION TO WEST AS WELL.

9. CASTAGNA ANSWERED THAT, ALTHOUGH HE WAS TOO UNINFORMED TO HAVE OPINION ON RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF ARMS BUILD-UP, HE WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT DISSIDENTS' TRIALS AS WAS PCI. PARTY PAPER UNITA' HAD HAD ARTICLE YESTERDAY CRITICIZING SOVIETS.

10 THE PROBLEM WITH THE RUSSIANS, CONTINUED CASTAGNA, IS THAT UNUSED TO DEMOCRATIC GIVE AND TAKE, THEY APPEAR TO BE UNABLE TO EXERCISE GOOD JUDGMENT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF CRITICISM IS LEGITIMATE AND WHAT NOT. HE HAD HAD NEW SOVIET CONSUL IN MILAN MEDVEDOVSKI (REF D) IN HIS OFFICE ONLY YESTERDAY AND MEDVEDOV-

SKI WAS COMPLAINING ABOUT UNITA' ARTICLE CRITICIZING THE USSR.
CASTAGNA HAD GIVEN MEDVEDOVSKI PCI VIEW THAT THERE WAS NO HARM IN
ALLOWING INDIVIDUAL SOVIET CITIZENS TO CRITICIZE THE REGIME.
MEDVEDOVSKI, HOWEVER, APPEARED NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT CASTAGNA WAS
SAYING. IT WAS, SAID CASTAGNA, A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE DEAF.

11. CHANGING THE SUBJECT AGAIN, CASTAGNA SAID HE HOPED ONE DAY TO
HAVE CHANCE TO VISIT THE US. PCI COLLEAGUES WHO HAD BEEN THERE HAD
COME BACK WITH CONTRASTING IMPRESSIONS. THOSE WHO HAD SPENT THEIR
TIME IN BIG CITIES, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE TAKEN BY WHAT THEY SAW AS
CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE. OTHERS, LIKE HIS GOOD FRIEND MILAN PRO-
VINCIAL PRESIDENT ROBERTO VATALI WHO HAD SPENT SEVERAL DAYS IN
CENTRAL ILLINOIS IN 1976, WERE VERY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY WHAT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 MILAN 01078 150530Z

THEY SAW AND DID. VITALI WAS STILL TALKING ABOUT HIS TRIP
TWO YEARS LATER. CASTAGNA IN SHORT THOUGHT THIS KIND OF INTERCHANGE
POSITIVE ALL AROUND AND HOPED SOME DAY TO BE PART OF IT HIMSELF.

12. BUT FOR NOW HE WAS ABOUT TO DEPART ON VACATION WITH HIS WIFE FOR
YUGOSLAVIA COAST, AN AREA THEY KNEW WELL. SETTING WAS BEAUTIFUL
AND DISTANCE FROM MILAN NOT EXCESSIVE - AN ADVANTAGE
IN CASE SOME CRISIS AT HOME WERE TO NECESSITATE HIS QUICK RETURN.
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